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2002HANOI00899 - CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL PTQ1379

PAGE 01 HANOI 00899 01 OF 02 120749Z
ACTION EAP-00

INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	ACQ-00	CIAE-00	DINT-00	DOEE-00	DOTE-00
	SRPP-00	DS-00	EB-00	OIGO-00	FAAE-00	FBIE-00	VC-00
	H-01	TEDE-00	INR-00	LAB-01	L-00	VCE-00	AC-01
	NSAE-00	NSCE-00	OMB-01	OPIC-01	PA-00	PM-00	PRS-00
	ACE-00	P-00	SP-00	TRSE-00	USIE-00	ECA-00	PMB-00
	DSCC-00	DRL-02	G-00	NFAT-00	SAS-00	/007W	

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FM AMEMBASSY HANOI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6163
INFO SECDEF WASHDC
ASEAN COLLECTIVE
AMEMBASSY BEIJING
USCINCPAC HONOLULU HI

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HANOI 000899

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E.O. 12958: DECL 04/12/2012

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SUBJECT: THE NEXT PRIME MINISTER WILL BE . . .

1. (U) CLASSIFIED BY SCOTT BELLARD, POL/C; REASON 1.5(D)

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PAGE 02 HANOI 00899 01 OF 02 120749Z

2. (SBU) SUMMARY: DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER NGUYEN TAN DUNG IS EXPECTED BY MANY OBSERVERS TO BECOME PRIME MINISTER AFTER THE MAY NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS. TRAN DUOC LUONG WILL LIKELY REMAIN PRESIDENT. TRADE MINISTER VU KHOAN IS WIDELY PREDICTED TO BECOME A DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER. NATIONAL ASSEMBLY CHAIRMAN NGUYEN VAN AN, WHO ALSO CHAIRS THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF VIETNAM (CPV) ORGANIZATION COMMISSION, IS SEEN AS THE MOST INFLUENTIAL LEADER ON MANY ISSUES, EVEN ECLIPSING PARTY GENERAL SECRETARY NONG DUC MANH. END SUMMARY.

3. (SBU) SENIOR COLONEL TRAN NHUNG, INTERNATIONAL EDITOR OF PEOPLE'S ARMY NEWSPAPER, OUTLINED WHAT HE DEPICTED AS PERSONAL VIEWS ON UPCOMING CHANGES IN VIETNAM'S LEADERSHIP DURING AN APRIL 5 MEETING WITH POLOFF. COLONEL NHUNG PREDICTED THAT INCUMBENT PM PHAN VAN KHAI WILL LEAVE OFFICE "SOON," BOTH BECAUSE KHAI WANTS TO RETIRE, AND BECAUSE "THE PEOPLE" WOULD OPPOSE AN EXTENSION OF HIS TERM. (NOTE: THERE ARE NUMEROUS RUMORS ABOUT UNSAVORY BUSINESS DEALINGS BY HIS FAMILY MEMBERS, ESPECIALLY HIS SON. END NOTE.) COLONEL NHUNG EMPHASIZED THAT KHAI WAS SUPPOSED TO RETIRE A YEAR AGO, AFTER THE NINTH PARTY CONGRESS.

PRIME MINISTER AND DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER

4. (C) COLONEL NHUNG REVIEWED THREE PROBABLE CANDIDATES FOR PRIME MINISTER -- DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER NGUYEN TAN DUNG, HO CHI MINH CITY PARTY CHIEF NGUYEN MINH TRIET, AND TRADE MINISTER VU KHOAN. DUNG, A PROTEGE OF FORMER PM VO VAN KIET, WILL LIKELY BE THE NEXT PM, COLONEL NHUNG

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 HANOI 00899 01 OF 02 120749Z

PREDICTED. HE REMARKED THAT DUNG AND TRIET WERE ALMOST IDENTICAL IN POLICY TERMS, BUT THAT TRIET WANTED TO STAY WHERE HE IS, AT VIETNAM'S ECONOMIC CENTER. YOUNGER, MORE OUTWARD-ORIENTED PARTY MEMBERS SUPPORT KHOAN, BUT KHOAN DOES NOT YET HAVE ENOUGH SUPPORT AT SENIOR LEVELS TO BECOME PM. KHOAN IS ALSO THE ONLY ONE OF THE THREE NOT ON THE POLITBURO. FURTHERMORE, AS A NORTHERNER, KHOAN WOULD UPSET THE REGIONAL BALANCE AMONG THE SRV'S TOP THREE OFFICES. THE PM MUST BE A SOUTHERNER, COLONEL NHUNG CLAIMED, SINCE NEITHER GENERAL SECRETARY NONG DUC MANH NOR PRESIDENT TRAN DUC LUONG IS APT TO LEAVE OFFICE. INSTEAD, COLONEL NHUNG EXPRESSED THE EXPECTATION THAT VU KHOAN WILL MOVE UP TO ONE OF THE FOUR DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER SLOTS, AS HAS BEEN WIDELY RUMORED. (NOTE: MOST LIKELY, HE WILL TAKE OVER THE PORTFOLIO NOW HELD BY NGUYEN MANH CAM. END NOTE.) COLONEL NHUNG REFUSED TO SPECULATE ABOUT THE OTHER THREE DPM POSITIONS. HE NOTED THAT THE MILITARY AND SECURITY

APPARATUS IS IN A "WEAK POSITION," WITH ITS LEADERS FACING REPLACEMENT AND EXTERNAL THREATS ON THE WANE. THEREFORE, THEY HAVE "LITTLE TO SAY" OVER GOVERNMENT LEADERSHIP, HE CLAIMED.

PRESIDENT

15. (C) COLONEL NHUNG DISCOUNTED ANY CHANGE IN THE PRESIDENCY. TRAN DUC LUONG IS NOT HIMSELF INFLUENTIAL AND "NO ONE WANTS HIS JOB." WITH ONLY THE JUDICIARY AND THE PROCURACY UNDER HIS PURVIEW, LUONG IS NOT NEARLY AS POWERFUL AS HIS PREDECESSOR LE DUC ANH, WHO HELD STRONG PARTY POSITIONS AND HAD SWAY OVER THE MFA, THE SECURITY
CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 HANOI 00899 01 OF 02 120749Z
APPARATUS, AND THE MILITARY, COLONEL NHUNG DESCRIBED.

CABINET MINISTERS

16. (C) COLONEL NHUNG PREDICTED REPLACEMENT OF AT LEAST HALF OF THE CURRENT CABINET MINISTERS INCLUDING FOREIGN AFFAIRS NGUYEN DY NIEN, DEFENSE MINISTER PHAM VAN TRA, PUBLIC SECURITY MINISTER LE MINH HUONG, AND PLANNING AND INVESTMENT MINISTER TRAN XUAN GIA. FINANCE MINISTER NGUYEN SINH HUNG, EDUCATION AND TRAINING MINISTER NGUYEN MINH HIEN, TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATION MINISTER LE NGOC HOAN, AND HEALTH MINISTER DO NGUYEN PHUONG WOULD REMAIN, HE SAID.

PARTY LEADERSHIP

17. (C) NGUYEN VAN AN HAS BECOME THE MOST, OR AT LEAST SECOND MOST, POWERFUL MAN IN VIETNAM, ACCORDING TO COLONEL NHUNG, BECAUSE AS DIRECTOR OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE'S ORGANIZATION COMMISSION FOR TEN YEARS, AN STOCKED CPV RANKS WITH HIS SUPPORTERS. AN ALSO "MAKES STRONG DECISIONS." NHUNG PREDICTED THAT AN WOULD EXPAND THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY'S ROLE AT A FASTER PACE THAN NONG DUC MANH HAD

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL PTQ1380

PAGE 01 HANOI 00899 02 OF 02 120749Z
ACTION EAP-00

INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	ACQ-00	CIAE-00	DINT-00	DOEE-00	DOTE-00
	SRPP-00	DS-00	EB-00	FAAE-00	FBIE-00	VC-00	H-01
	TEDE-00	INR-00	LAB-01	L-00	VCE-00	AC-01	NSAE-00
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	P-00	SP-00	IRM-00	TRSE-00	USIE-00	PMB-00	DSCC-00
	DRL-02	G-00	NFAT-00	SAS-00	/007W		
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R 120709Z APR 02
FM AMEMBASSY HANOI
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 HANOI 000899

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DURING HIS TENURE AS CHAIRMAN, BUT THAT AN WOULD STAY IN HIS CURRENT POSITION FOR NOW.

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 HANOI 00899 02 OF 02 120749Z

18. (C) THE CPV CHOSE NONG DUC MANH AS A TRANSITIONAL LEADER, COLONEL NHUNG ANALYZED, BECAUSE RIVAL FACTIONS COULD NOT AGREE BETWEEN TRAN DUC LUONG AND NGUYEN VAN AN. (NOTE: WE DO NOT BELIEVE LUONG WAS TRULY IN THE RUNNING. THE REAL RACE WAS PROBABLY AMONG THEN-GENERAL SECRETARY LE KHA PHIEU, MANH, AND AN. END NOTE.) COLONEL NHUNG CONTRASTED MANH WITH AN, CLAIMING THAT MANH COULD NOT MAKE STRATEGIC DECISIONS WITHOUT CONSULTING OTHERS. WHILE MANH'S CONSENSUS-BUILDING SKILLS WERE VALUABLE AS NA CHAIRMAN, SUCH AN APPROACH IS "INEFFECTIVE" AS GENERAL SECRETARY. COLONEL NHUNG CRITICIZED THAT MANH CANNOT TAKE

SIPDIS

THE LEAD, ENFORCE ORDER, OR IMPOSE HIS DECISIONS; HE HAS NO SUPPORT TO DO SO. COLONEL NHUNG EXPRESSED DOUBT THAT MANH WOULD DEVELOP MUCH OR BECOME SUBSTANTIALLY MORE

EFFECTIVE AS PARTY LEADER. HE ADDED THAT THE RECENT CPV MOVEMENT TOWARDS ALLOWING MEMBERS TO CONTINUE PRIVATE BUSINESSES WAS NOT MANH'S INITIATIVE DESPITE MANH'S PUBLIC CALL THAT THE PARTY CONSIDER CHANGING THE POLICY. THE PROPOSAL ORIGINATED SEVERAL YEARS AGO, BUT WAS OPPOSED, COLONEL NHUNG SAID, BY THEN-ADVISORS LE DUC ANH AND DO MUOI.

19. (C) COLONEL NHUNG CHARACTERIZED THE MOVE TO ALLOW PARTY MEMBERS TO CONTINUE IN BUSINESS AS REPRESENTATIVE OF THE GROWING INFLUENCE OF YOUNGER -- MORE PRAGMATIC AND EDUCATED -- MEMBERS WHO ARE GRADUALLY WINNING OVER THEIR ELDERS. HE SAID ANOTHER SIGN OF THIS GENERATIONAL CHANGE IS THE TREND FOR THE CPV TO STEP BACK TO MORE GENERAL POLICY GUIDANCE AND ALLOW LAW TO DICTATE SPECIFIC DECISIONS. THE PUBLIC, ACTING THROUGH THE NA, EXPECTS LAWS
CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 HANOI 00899 02 OF 02 120749Z
TO SUPPLANT DETAILED PARTY GUIDELINES AND INSTRUCTIONS,
COLONEL NHUNG CLAIMED.

110. (C) COMMENT: WE OFFER COLONEL NHUNG'S INDIVIDUAL VIEWS BECAUSE OF THEIR APPARENTLY FRANK NATURE AND HIS ACCESS TO LEADERSHIP CIRCLES GIVEN HIS POSITION. MUCH CAN CHANGE BETWEEN NOW AND THIS SUMMER, ESPECIALLY GIVEN THE STAKES INVOLVED IN LEADERSHIP DYNAMICS. COLONEL NHUNG'S CANDOR WAS STRIKING, BUT NOT UNPRECEDENTED, PARTICULARLY IN ONE-ON-ONE DISCUSSIONS. HE ADMITTED THAT HE WAS NOT SUPPOSED TO MEET FOREIGNERS ALONE, BUT THAT HE WAS NOT WORRIED ABOUT THE CONSEQUENCES BECAUSE HE IS NEARING RETIREMENT.
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